

THURSDAY

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County commissioners looking for savings

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Setting a figure for mileage reimbursement created a brief period of spirited debate among the Sullivan County Commissioners during their initial meeting of 2009 Wednesday morning.

During the final six months of 2008 the county reimbursement was set at 58.5 cents per mile, the maximum figure established by the Internal Revenue Service. Effective

Jan. 1, the IRS mileage rate was lowered to 55 cents a mile.

On a 2-1 vote, the commissioners also elected to lower the Sullivan County mileage reimbursement to keep in line with the new IRS rate.

After Commissioner Ben Nelson made a motion to set the county rate at 55 cents, Commissioner Ethel Jarvis said, "this is ludicrous," before voting against Nelson's motion. Commission chairman Jeff Barrette went along with Nelson.

"I think this rate is based

on realities," Nelson said.

When asked after the meeting, Jarvis said she has favored a lower mileage reimbursement in the past. "I was prepared to go back to 40 cents," Jarvis said.

A purchase order from the Sullivan County Registry of Deeds office requesting approval to expend \$24,000 to restore the final nine volumes of deeds damaged in a fire in 1885 was unanimously rejected. A sum of \$12,000 was earmarked to restore four volumes in the budget, according to Barrette. "Spending more

than what was intended, I will not sign that warrant," Jarvis added.

Barrette said the bottom line in the budget is generally the most important part. He said the revenue for the first six months of the current budget year is under projection by \$19,000. Had the revenue been on target or over, Barrette said he would have supported the \$24,000 request.

Nelson asked if it might be prudent to meet with department heads to discuss their budgets. County

Administrator Greg Chanis said he thought every department was at budget or under budget year to date on the expense side, making up for revenue shortfalls in the budget.

House of Corrections Superintendent Ross L. Cunningham told the commissioners the gift exchange for children with a family member at the House of Corrections at Christmas time was successful. "This was about the children, on that scope only," he said.

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Cunningham said several churches got together to promote this program. "I think this is beneficial," Barrette said.

The field for the new position of Sullivan County Finance Director has been narrowed down to three from the seven applicants interviewed prior to Christmas. They will now be interviewed by the commissioners on Thursday, Jan. 15.

Barrette suggested public participation at the end of each meeting be limited to five minutes per person. His proposal was supported by Nelson and Jarvis.

Cunningham reported the population at the House of Corrections on Tuesday was 82, exactly the same as a year ago. The breakdown included 73 males and nine females.

The total census including 14 males in the transitional

housing unit and those confined at other correctional facilities in New Hampshire totaled 119 compared to 101 a year ago.

At the outset of the meeting, Barrette was re-elected chairman; Nelson, vice chairman, and Jarvis, clerk.

The next meeting of the commissioners will be held at 3 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 22 at Sullivan County Health Care in Unity.